



CITY COUNCIL

Standards of Living Committee

Monday, August 5, 2013
5:30 pm
or immediately following Special Meeting
City Council Office

The Standards of Living Committee's responsibilities and topics include but are not limited to Housing Planning strategies, Building, Trades and Property Maintenance Inspection and Enforcement, Public Safety, Public Works, Police, Fire, Neighborhood Parks, Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Development, Customer Service, Graffiti Abatement, Community Group Organization and Support

Committee Members: Marcia Goodman Hinnershitz (Co-Chair), Randy Corcoran (Co-Chair), and Jeffrey Waltman

Although Council committee meetings are open to the public, public comment is not permitted at Council Committee meetings. However, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe the meetings. Comment from citizens or professionals during the meeting may be solicited on agenda topics via invitation by the Committee Chair.

All electronic recording devices must be at the entry door in all meeting rooms and offices, as per Bill No. 27-2012

I. Review Administrative Reports

- Administrative Services
 - CSC – Quarterly starting in August
- CD – Starting in June – Page 9 – Next Report Sept
 - Property Maintenance (all programs and initiatives)
 - Zoning –
 - HARB
 - Implementation of Housing Strategies

- Trades
- **Police** – Quarterly next update Oct
- **Public Works** – Quarterly starting in Oct
 - **WWTP – Page 7**
 - Utilities
 - Streets/Parks
 - Property Maintenance
 - Trash & Recycling
- **Fire - Quarterly starting in August**
 - Fire Suppression –
 - Fire Marshal – investigations and inspections
 - EMS

II. 2nd & Penn Streetscape (PAGE 10)

III. Gateway Initiatives - Update

IV. Fleet Management

Sept Draft Agenda

- Blight Update w/ Acquisition of blighted properties
- MVA Action Plan
- Update Zoning Backlog



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Standards of Living Committee

Meeting Report Monday, July 1, 2013

Committee Members Attending: R. Corcoran (Co-Chair)

Others Attending: F. Acosta, D. Sterner, D. Reed, S. Marmarou, C. Jones, C. Younger, C. Snyder, L. Kelleher, E. Lloyd, L. Murin, D. Klahr, J. Washington, R. Natale, L. Agudo, B. Rivera

Mr. Corcoran called the meeting to order at 5:12 pm.

I. REVIEW ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

- **CD Report**

Mr. Agudo distributed handouts to the group and explained that there are parts in the consolidated report that do not necessarily belong with the Standards of Living issues, however, he felt that they were of enough importance to include in the report.

Mr. Agudo stated that the CD Department's effort is to get guidance from Council to better manage areas moving forward. That being said, he turned to the Building & Trades section and noted that in the bird's eye view complaints have been reduced significantly from last year and previous years. He went on to explain how other area numbers also were reduced and that these numbers reflect months January to May.

Mr. Agudo also apprised council that Mr. Wargo, Chief Building Inspector just resigned and until that position is filled, Brian Nicarry will be assisting with those duties.

Mr. Corcoran asked why the number of permits is down in this report.

Mr. Agudo responded that there is a backlog, specifically with UGI permits and once the department gets caught up with that backlog, the numbers will substantially increase.

Mr. Agudo then pointed out the handout pertaining to the Zoning, Planning and Historic Preservation.

Ms. Kelleher stated that the premise behind getting the reports to council beforehand was to make the time in committees more efficient so as to not spend so much time explaining the information in the report unless council need an explanation.

Mr. Acosta agreed with Ms. Kelleher in that he would have liked to have this report before the meeting so that he could study it and then if he had questions or concerns regarding the information, he would bring that to Mr. Agudo's attention.

Mr. Agudo explained that he did have a report sent to Ms. Kelleher.

Ms. Kelleher stated that she had explained to Mr. Agudo that the file was in PDF format and was too large to include as part of the agenda and that he would have to convert it into a Word document to make it possible to submit with the agenda.

Mr. Acosta requested that this issue be resolved as soon as possible as he wants to be able to look at reports ahead of time so that at meetings only questions and concerns can be addressed.

Mr. Agudo proceeded stating that the Zoning backlog letters were sent out and that they have been receiving many reports asking why it has taken so long. There have been talks about changing some of the fees involved. He has requested to abstain from this as one of the properties involved belongs to him.

- **Quality of Life Report**

Mr. Agudo stated that the number of violations decreased for several reasons. The first reason is because residents are complying with issues that warrant a QoL ticket. The second reason is because there had been three inspectors devoted full time to QoL and that staffing has decreased by one. The third reason is because constituents understand the process more and therefore are more in compliance.

Mr. Acosta recognized that the department is doing more with less and that is to be commended.

Mr. Agudo thanked Mr. Acosta and stated that he must note that Mr. Kersley has been an integral part of this collaborative effort in improving operations.

Mr. Corcoran noted that with the summer months here, he imagines that the most repeated violation may be high grass and weeds.

Mr. Agudo stated that he has seen great progress in all districts and would like to thank Council for getting the information out to the constituents in their districts as this has led to the progress he has seen.

Mr. Agudo stated that he has a chart that maps all the violations in the city so that larger areas can be covered faster and more productively. He stated that the last portion of the report is the Act 47 Implementation.

Mr. Acosta stated that he is working on setting up a meeting with DCED and would like to include the CD department when the meeting occurs.

Mr. Agudo directed council to page 9 of the report which shows a letter from CNA and with their assistance, CD has been able to recover \$3M in uncollected debt which leaves a balance of roughly \$1M left to collect.

Mr. Marmarou asked where CNA relocated to.

Mr. Agudo answered that they have several locations; however, their main location is in Shillington.

Mr. Marmarou noted that when they were in the city, they were good tenants.

Ms. Reed asked if the building is still owned by CNA on Penn Street. Mr. Agudo responded that the building is still owned by CNA.

Mr. Acosta asked how the outstanding debt of \$1M be collected. Mr. Agudo responded that due to legal aspects he is unable to disclose that information at this time.

- **Public Works Report**

Mr. Jones began to distribute a report.

Mr. Acosta stated his frustration with receiving reports on the day of a meeting. This cannot continue to happen and has asked that this be corrected as soon as possible.

Mr. Lloyd assured Mr. Acosta that another method would be looked at in order to make certain these reports are received prior to meetings.

At this time, Ms. Snyder handed out the Police Report and apologized for getting it to Council on the day of the meeting. She was unaware that it was not sent to Ms. Kelleher so it could be put into the agenda.

Mr. Jones apologized that the report was only getting to Council now. He proceeded explaining that he divided his report into four parts. The first of which is Administration. He stated that the Cotton Street paving has still been an issue as it has not been completed; however, the money provided by UGI will be used to repair the lane damaged by the meter project.

Mr. Jones stated that opening bids are set to begin next week on the Main Library and is pleased to say that the Library has agreed to close early in order to get the renovations completed as quickly and effectively as possible.

He stated that in regard to the Penn Street Pedestrian Lighting, Public Works has been working with PennDOT and he anticipates significant construction being accomplished this year.

- Fleet

Regarding Fleet, he continued through the report summarizing what is reported and asked if there were any questions; none were asked.

- Highways

Mr. Jones proceeded with explaining that in regard to the highways, the report was divided into the number of days per month being used for a specific program starting from January to May of this year.

- Parks

Mr. Jones stated that for the Parks there has been much mowing and tree work. Tree work is being completed almost on a daily basis which has put us in much better shape than last year.

Mr. Acosta stated that he received complaints about Pendora Park's grass being too high and also complaints on the 3rd & Spruce park having unsanitary conditions with the "port-o-potties" there. He asked how often they are cleaned and maintained and whose responsibility it is to do so.

Mr. Jones stated that he would look into those issues and provide an update on them.

- Public Buildings

Mr. Jones stated that the total number of square footage that is maintained in public buildings is 444,995. With that being said, due to the demand of tradesmen needed, there are no signs of work slowing down. He stated that the foreman in this department has worked very hard to make sure work is disseminated daily and this has helped a great deal in keeping the lines of communication open by providing a constant contact person.

Mr. Jones stated that next week the department will be receiving its own recycling trucks. He went through some of the report and asked if there were any questions and none were asked.

- Wastewater

Mr. Jones stated that in reference to the Wastewater Division this is something that is out of their control as consumption of water varies so vastly.

Mr. Corcoran asked what the city does with sludge.

Mr. Jones replied that it goes through a process of “de-watering” then it goes to a landfill.

- Utilities Division

Mr. Jones stated that the text in this particular section of the report is quite heavy so when Council has time to read it, he can answer any questions or concerns they may have.

Mr. Jones pointed out that the total number of calls is very high but out of that number, the actual number of calls that is the City’s responsibility is quite low. He explained that residents will call the City before they call a plumber thinking it is something that can be taken care of by the City but that simply is not the case in most circumstances.

Mr. Sterner asked if there is a way to get reimbursed for our unnecessary manpower being used and Mr. Acosta responded that we, the City, must respond to these calls; the sewage system is ours so that makes us responsible to answer to these calls even if ultimately it is the homeowner’s responsibility to fix the actual issue.

Mr. Marmarou asked if we are staying within our budget with all these sewer projects.

Mr. Jones responded that the short answer is yes; however, he is always looking for ways to save money wherever possible.

Mr. Corcoran asked if the street lights along Route 422 into the Lancaster Avenue exchange are our responsibility because they are not functioning.

Mr. Jones stated that he is unsure of whose responsibility it is but will find out. He believes that the Lancaster Avenue exchange may be our responsibility.

II. RECREATION FEES

Ms. Klahr stated that these fees were based on a Maximus study which was set too high. She has sent charts of fees to many different people but nothing was talked about or done.

Ms. Klahr stated that the feedback for the work that her organization is completing has been excellent. She commended her cleanup crew which consists of three people for doing a great job but bathrooms continue to be a problem. She gave Baer Park and 3rd & Spruce Park as examples of this problem. She suggested a roll gate be installed as a way to enable people to use the bathrooms instead of portable restrooms at the 3rd & Spruce Park.

Mr. Acosta asked that she get an estimate on the cost of having a roll gate installed and apprise council of this.

Ms. Klahr distributed a flyer with information on the present recreation fees and Mr. Acosta commended Ms. Klahr and her department on a job well done as it looks very professional and very inviting; the fees are very much attainable to most everyone. He went on to further commend Ms. Klahr and all involved on a wonderful presentation. The only thing he asks is that the department involves City Council in determining these fees moving forward.

III. GATEWAY INITIATIVES

Ms. Snyder stated that a meeting is being comprised with Ms. Edwards, Mr. Harrity and Mr. Natale regarding these initiatives and she will have a full report for council in August. She also stated that she is talking with adjoining municipalities about assisting in this effort.

IV. BLIGHT UPDATE

Mr. Agudo stated that this is still a work in progress and he will have a report out to Council in the coming weeks.

Mr. Corcoran adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Bea Rivera, Legislative Aide

SECOND AND PENN PROPOSED STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

Background

The Gateway Area project is one of three targeted economic development efforts of the Wyomissing Foundation through its Strategic Investment Fund. The Gateway Area is generally focused on the area surrounding 2nd & Penn.

This effort is guided by a Core Task Force chaired by Dr. Anna Weitz, President of Reading Area Community College. RACC also acts as Lead Partner for this project. The City is represented on this Task Force by Lenin Agudo, Community Development Director.

Other active participants include the Reading Redevelopment Authority, Berks Arts Council, Reading Downtown Improvement District, Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce, and GoggleWorks.

The major program elements of this initiative include:

- providing enhanced workforce training and post-secondary education options to improve career opportunities for Reading residents—undertaken by RACC.
- expanding and promoting arts and entertainment programming to increase utilization and patronage of existing facilities and resources—undertaken by DID and GoggleWorks.
- improving the attractiveness of the Gateway district to visitors through operational, signage, and physical enhancements that improve perceived security, pedestrian flow, and relationships among the various venues, facilities, parking resources, and restaurants in the area.

Proposed Streetscape Improvements

The 2nd Street streetscape improvements proposed in the current plan will make the area more pedestrian friendly for visitors to the various cultural arts venues, to RACC students and visitors, and to other persons who live and work in the area. A second important objective is to increase pedestrian safety.

In particular, the adjustment to the curbline at 2nd & Washington will increase pedestrian safety and convenience by significantly reducing the crossing distance while having no impact on the flow of the two lanes of traffic turning left from Washington onto 2nd Street. This improved crosswalk should also further discourage jaywalking that now often occurs in this area.

The proposed median/pedestrian refuge at Court Street is also intended to improve pedestrian safety. It has been documented that there is a significant amount of jaywalking across 2nd Street that now occurs at Court. A substantial portion of this is RACC-related activity moving between parking facilities and classrooms. This median/refuge will help protect those pedestrians.